

University of Groningen

Short term vocational identity development

van der Gaag, M.A.E.; Kunnen, Saskia

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version

Early version, also known as pre-print

Publication date:

2012

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van der Gaag, M. A. E., & Kunnen, S. (2012). *Short term vocational identity development*. Poster session presented at VNOP, Wageningen, Netherlands.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Short-term Vocational Identity Development

Mandy van der Gaag & Saskia Kunnen



Introduction

With this research, we aim to gain insight in the identity development of emerging adults when adapting to their new life as students of higher education. Traditionally identity development is viewed as a long-term process (Erikson, 1959). However, as Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, Frijns, van Lier & Meeus (2010) showed, identity development can occur on a time-scale of days. In this study we investigate how identity develops on a time-scale of weeks. Based on Marcia's identity status paradigm (1966) we operationalize identity development as an interplay between exploration and commitment.

Research questions

Do individual differences exist in the development of a vocational identity?
How do exploration and commitment interact over the course of the first year of higher education?

Method

In this pilot study, 15 first year psychology students were asked to report weekly on their level of exploration and the strength of their commitment with regard to education. They did this on a 6 point likert-scale, over the course of 25 weeks. The items used are inspired by the GIDS (Bosma, 1985), and measurements of daily identity development by Klimstra et al. (2010).

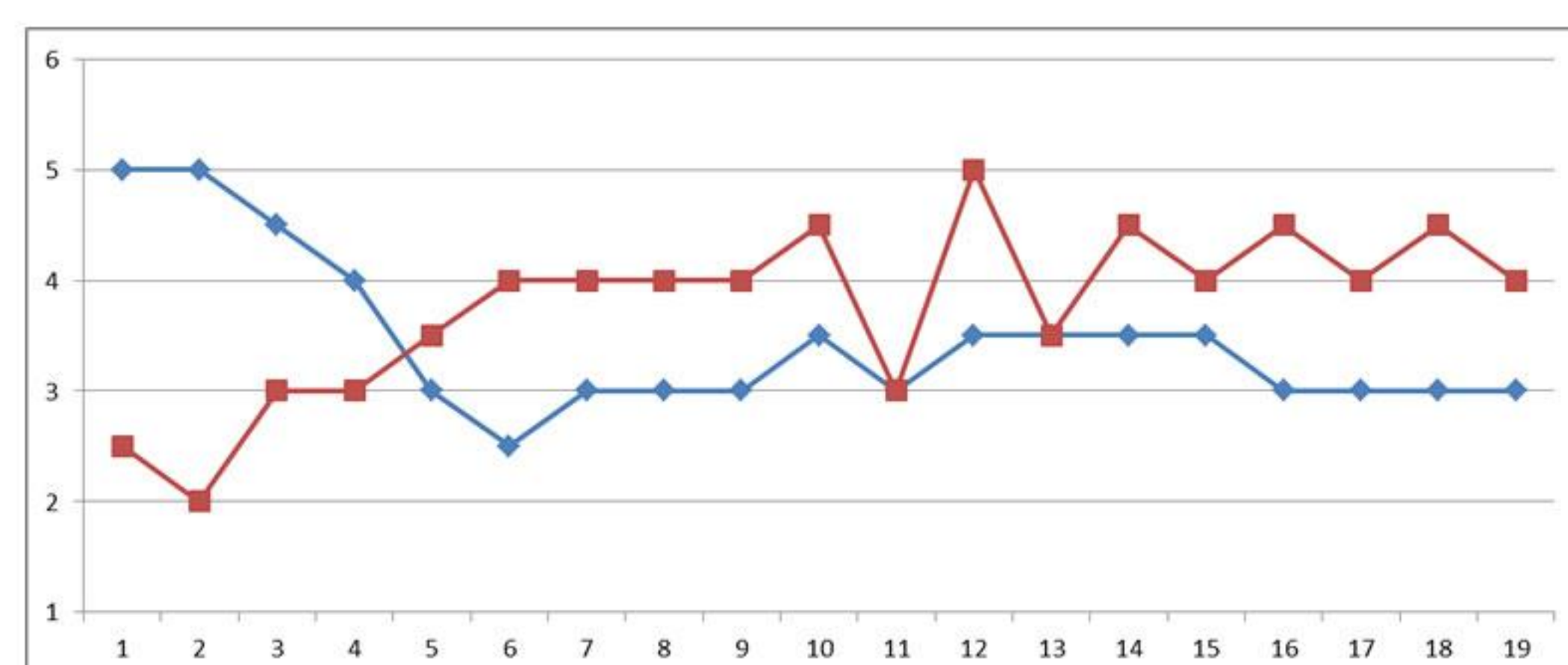
Commitment items

'Do you stand by your educational choice?'
'Do you feel confident because of your education?'

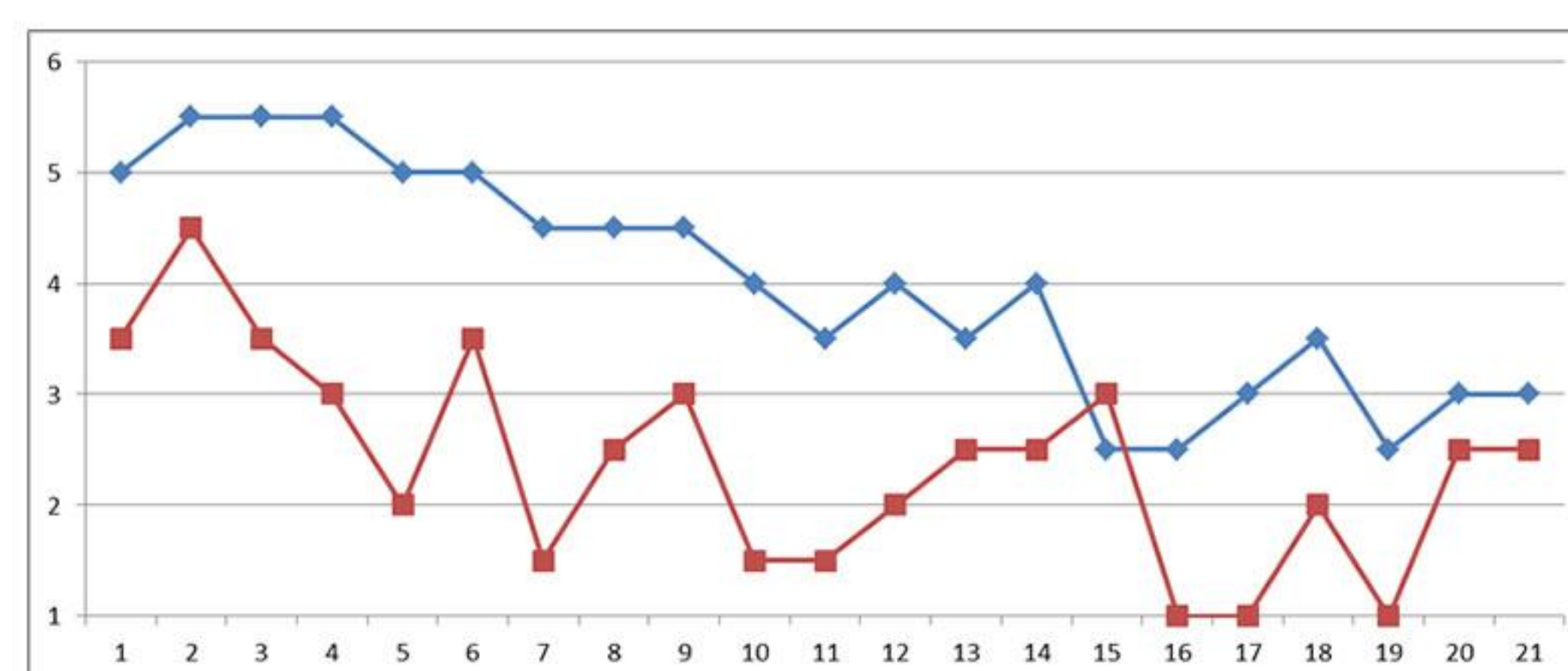
Exploration items

'Have you been asking yourself whether this is the right education for you?'
'Do you try to learn as much as you can about (subjects within) your education?'

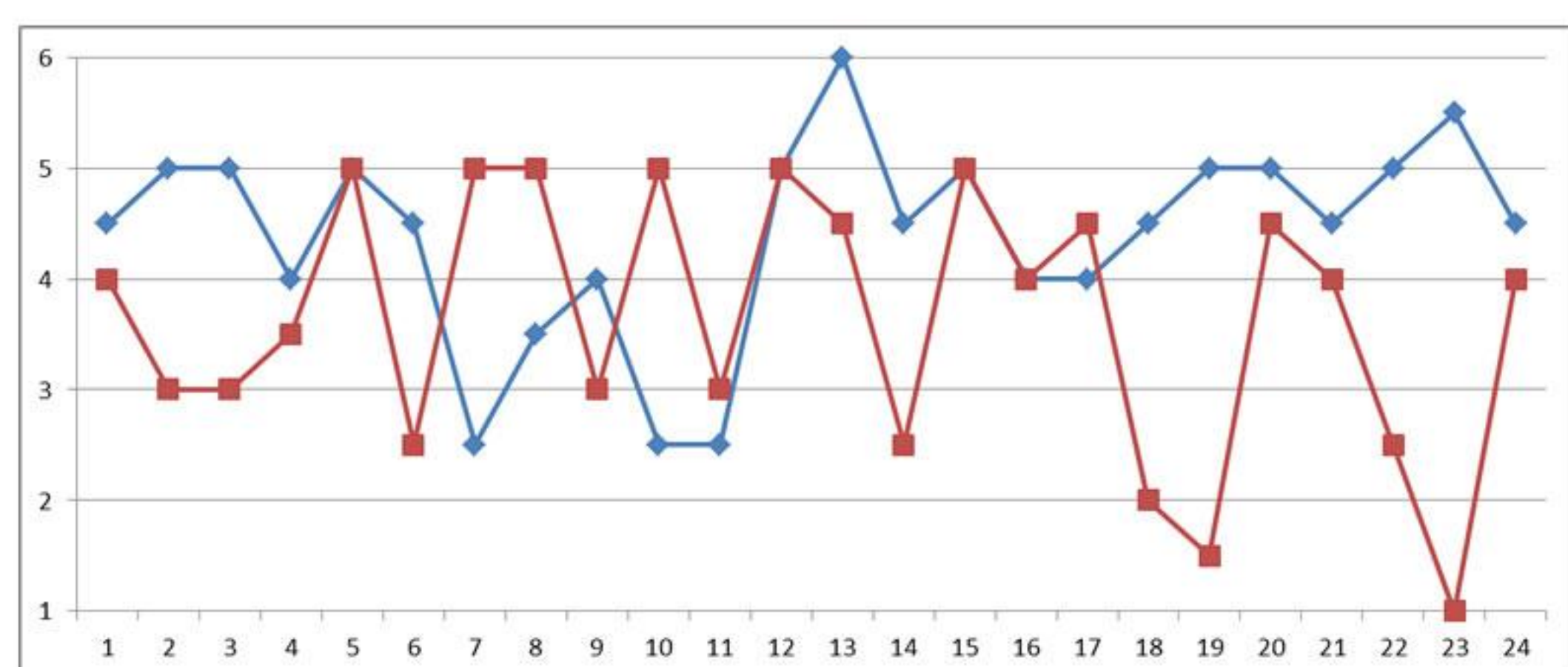
Preliminary Results



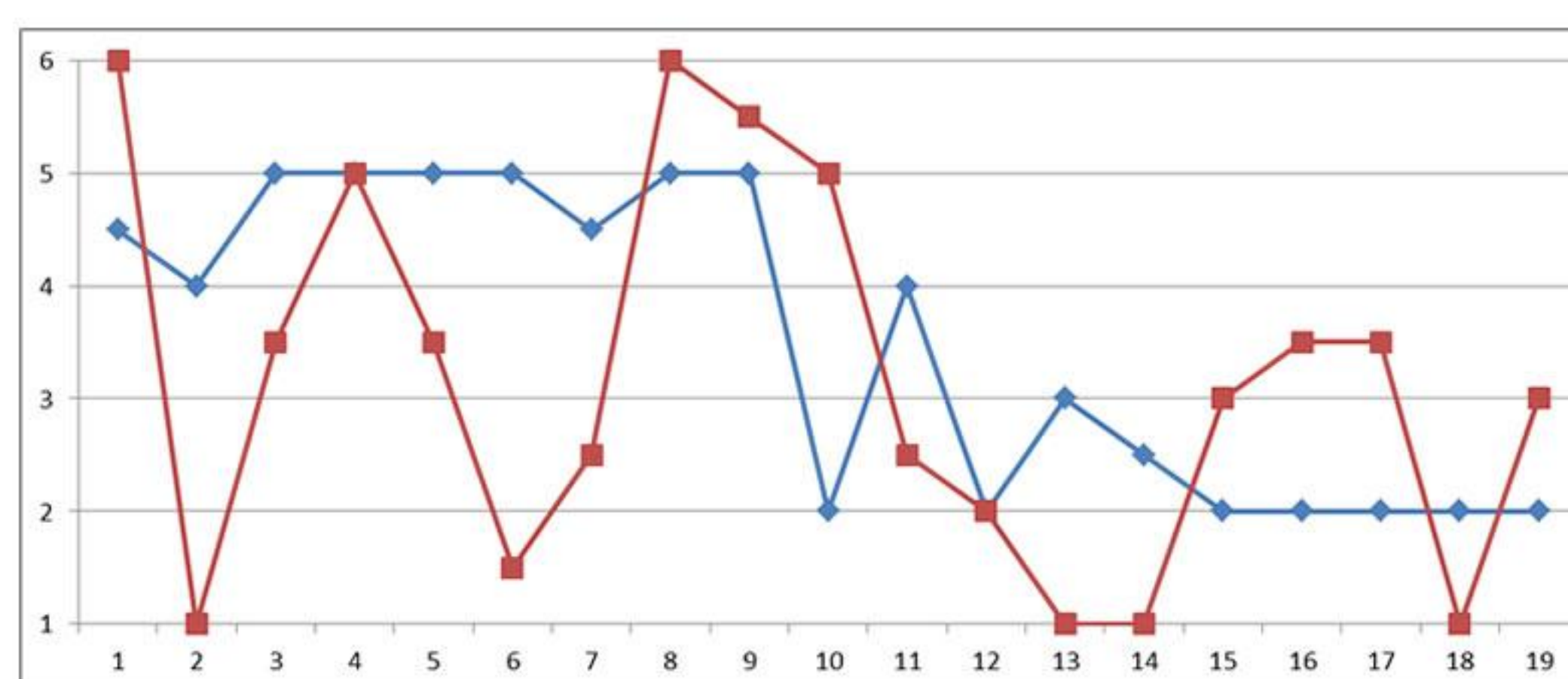
Stabilizing: commitment drops quickly while exploration increases, then both seem to stabilize



Slow decline: commitment slowly declines, exploration is variable, but also shows a tendency to decline



Variable: commitment and exploration are (highly) variable, there seems to be a tendency for commitment to increase and for exploration to decline



Sudden drop: commitment is stable and high, then suddenly drops and stabilizes on a low level, exploration is highly variable

Time in weeks

Discussion

As shown by the individual trajectories, students can differ greatly in how they develop a vocational identity. Some students show stability in commitment strength and amount of exploration, while others show a lot of variability. The relation between exploration and commitment seems to differ in each individual as well. For some, exploration rises as commitment decreases. For others, both exploration and commitment seem to decrease. Interestingly, in this pilot study, an increase in commitment towards the chosen education, seems to be relatively rare.

In the coming years we aim to expand our research and investigate if and how these trajectories are influenced by experiences and how different types of trajectories are related to wellbeing. In addition we will investigate if certain patterns of identity development precede educational drop-out.

Food for thought

What kind of factors could determine the shape of the identity development trajectories?

Do the chosen questions actually measure exploration and commitment? What could be good alternatives or additions?

Contact

m.a.e.van.der.gaag@rug.nl